

NAME: Fr. James F. Skupien
DATE OF BIRTH: June 1, 1941
DATE OF DEATH: February 11, 1996
ORDINATION: May 19, 1966

ASSIGNMENTS:
06/1966-06/1968 St. Joseph's Church, Portage, PA
06/1968-05/1969 Cathedral of Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, PA
06/1968-08/1972 Asst. Principal Bishop Guilfoyle High School
05/1969-08/1972 St. Mark's Church, Altoona, PA
08/1972-01/1982 Principal Bishop Guilfoyle High School
09/1977-09/1983 St. Joseph's Church, Williamsburg, PA
09/1983-1995 St. Joseph's Church, Bellwood, PA
1995 Retired

James Skupien, priest and principal of Bishop Guilfoyle High-School in Altoona, was caught by police partially clothed in his car with a young man in 1981 near state game lands in a location known for amorous teenagers and underage drinking. Skupien was in a diocesan vehicle. Skupien told police officer David Metzger he was counseling the young man. Skupien later told church officials he was operating a tractor on a farm and fell into a pond.

While Metzger indicated he believed the boy to be 18 years of age, no further investigation was done at the expressed direction of the Cambria County District Attorney according to the testimony of David Metzger before the Grand Jury on January 23, 2015. Metzger testified "And I had called the District Attorney's office in Cambria County and they said, let it go." Metzger did contact Monsignor Philip Saylor and inform him of the occurrence. Metzger testified:

"The conversation was -- like I said, it really bothered me myself because at the job level that this man was at in a high school, and he was sitting back -- you know, you counsel somebody in your house or whatever, but back in the wood- -- there was no crime committed. So it was just bothering me morally and so what I did was I went out and talked to Monsignor Saylor about it. He said that they have a -- they knew about him, that they even have a retreat that they sent these priests to. He even made a story about one of them -- they're not allowed to have phones or anything, but he had mentioned about one story where a priest was at this retreat and he somehow got a phone and contacted some young kids and met them while he was even at the retreat. But I never knew anything that, you know, that that was going on. But like I told him, it was more or less I was more concerned because he was a principal of a high school."

What Metzger perhaps didn't know is that Bishop Hogan had gotten involved. Hogan's notes from the "Secret Archives" entitled "Memorandum Secretum" state "While kept from P.D. (police department) report, and in media, there is a degree of awareness and discussion within local P.D.'s (police departments)." Hogan noted that "Chief M." was "thanked for his discretion."

The Grand Jury concludes that at the time Skupien was found with the unidentified young man in his car, he had already engaged in sexual child abuse with at least one minor. It is possible that a robust effort to investigate Skupien, rather than the actions that were taken to protect Skupien, Hogan, and the Diocese would have uncovered his previous victim and prevented further victimization.

The Grand Jury identified the individual in the car with Skupien in 1981; almost 35 years later. The individual was a struggling and disadvantaged 18-year-old (identified as X for purposes of this report). Skupien had engaged in a long term oral sex-for-cash arrangement with X after hiring X to work for him. Skupien would pay X for oral sex at locations which include the rectory of St. Joseph's Church in Williamsburg, Pennsylvania and at various "make out" locations. When Officer Metzger interrupted Skupien near the state game lands in 1981, Principal Skupien was engaged in purchased sex with X in a diocesan vehicle. X reported this to the Diocese in 2008. X wondered why a priest would do that to a troubled 18-year-old and specifically inquired "Why Bishop Hogan did nothing when the police reported it to him?" The Grand Jury can offer that answer. Hogan cared more about the reputation of himself and the Diocese than whatever Father Skupien was doing in that car in 1981. But this was not the only crime James Skupien would get away with.

In 2008 a victim came forward with a specific allegation. Skupien had forced him to engage in oral sex in between 1968 and 1971. The victim alleged that the conduct had escalated and that his mother had found evidence of his contact with Skupien on his clothing. Skupien had molested a child while serving as both a priest and school official within the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Hogan's concern was "discretion." Skupien died in 1996.